

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claim 5 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 6-8, 11, 12, 20, and 74 -76, and add Claim 77, as follows.

1-4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 77 5, wherein said input elements include a shutter button and a retrieval button, and wherein in the imaging mode after said capturing unit captures the key image captured in response to pressing of the shutter button and a retrieval button simultaneously, said retrieving unit starts the retrieval operation using the key image.

7. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 77 5, wherein, after said capturing unit captures the key image in the reproduction ~~a mode other than an imaging mode~~, said retrieving unit starts the retrieval operation using the key image.

8. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 77 5, wherein said storing unit stores the generic image to be retrieved in ~~on~~ the storage medium and stores the key image to be used as a retrieval key of a retrieval operation on the identical storage medium.

9. (Previously Presented) The digital camera according to claim 8, wherein a storing area for the generic image and a storing area for the key image in the storage medium are separated.

10. (Previously Presented) The digital camera according to claim 8, wherein information different from file management information for the generic image is attached to file management information for the key image.

11. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 8, wherein, in storing the key image ~~on~~ in the storage medium, the key image is stored after compression or curtailment of imaged subject image is performed.

12. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 8, wherein the key image stored ~~on~~ in the storage medium is copied, changed, or linked to the generic image.

13-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim ~~77~~ 5, wherein at least one of the input elements permits a user to designate ~~designates~~ an image ~~specified~~ as the key image or an image appearing from a retrieval result and one of the input elements comprises ~~presses~~ a retrieval button, which when pressed by the user causes ~~to thereby~~

~~cause~~ said retrieving unit to execute a retrieval operation again with the designated image as a key image.

21. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus comprising:
an imaging unit that images a subject image; and
a storing unit that stores the subject image on a storage medium,
wherein an imaging operation for an image or a reproduction operation for an image is possible even during a retrieval operation.

22. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus comprising:
an imaging unit that images a subject image; and
a storing unit that stores the subject image on a storage medium,
wherein, when the imaging apparatus is in a mode other than an imaging mode, the imaging apparatus is always in a state in which an arbitrary key image is selected as a retrieval key.

23. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the key image selected as a retrieval key is a key image obtained latest or earliest.

24. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus comprising:
an imaging unit that images a subject image; and
a storing unit that stores the subject image on a storage medium,

wherein, in selecting a key image as a retrieval key, the imaging apparatus displays images in order of time or order of file names.

25. (Withdrawn) A control program product for causing the imaging apparatus according to claim 1 to operate.

26. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus, comprising:
an imaging unit that acquires generic image data to be retrieved or key image data to be used as retrieval key by imaging an image of a subject;
a storage medium that stores the imaged generic image data; and
a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with the key image data, out of the generic image data stored in the storage medium, wherein
the imaging apparatus further comprises an operating unit that inputs a first operation input in acquiring the generic image data and a second operation input in acquiring the key image data in different operation forms.

27. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 26, wherein the operating unit includes a shutter button that is used for the first operation input and the second operation input.

28. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the operating unit includes another button that is operated together with the shutter button to thereby input the second operation input.

29. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the operating unit includes a mode selecting unit for switching an imaging mode for imaging a generic image and another operation mode different from the imaging mode, and

the second operation input for acquiring the key image data is inputted in the another operation mode.

30. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that images a subject image and stores the subject image on a storage medium, comprising:

an imaging unit that performs imaging processing for key image data to be used as retrieval key; and

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with the key image data, out of generic image data stored in the storage medium,

wherein the retrieving unit executes retrieval processing using the key image data with completion of imaging processing for the key image data by the imaging unit as a trigger.

31. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 26, further comprising a storage control unit that stores the key image data and the generic image data in an identical storage medium in expressions distinguishable from each other.

32. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the storage control unit stores the generic image data in a first storing area of the storage medium and stores the key image data in a second storing area of the storage medium.

33. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the storage control unit stores file management information of the key image data in the storage medium with identification information, which indicates that the key image data is different from the generic image data, attached to the file management information.

34. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the storage control unit makes it possible to use the key image data also as the generic image data by copying the key image data stored in the storage medium, changing file management information or a storing area of the key image data, or creating link data of the key image data.

35. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the storage control unit makes it possible to use the generic image data also as the key image data by copying the generic image data stored in the storage medium, changing file

management information or a storing area of the generic image data, or creating link data of the generic image data.

36. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 26, further comprising a selecting unit that, when the storage medium is a detachably replaceable storage medium and includes image data stored in other apparatuses, selects at least one of the image data stored in the storage medium as key image data.

37. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 36, further comprising a storage control unit that creates the key image data from the image data selected by the selecting unit and stores the key image data on the storage medium.

38. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that images a subject image and stores the subject image on a storage medium, comprising:

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with a key image data, out of generic image data stored in the storage medium; and

a selecting unit that selects the generic image data retrieved by the retrieving unit as new key image data, wherein

the retrieving unit executes retrieval processing again on the basis of the new key image data.

39. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 36, further comprising:

a sorting unit that, when the selecting unit selects the key image data, sorts plural generic image data stored in the storage medium on the basis of acquisition time or file names thereof; and

a display unit that displays the plural generic image data in an order of the sort.

40. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that images a subject image and stores the subject image on a storage medium, comprising:

an imaging unit that images generic image data to be retrieved; and

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with key image data, out of generic image data stored in the storage medium,

wherein the imaging apparatus executes access to the storage medium by the imaging unit and access to the storage medium by the retrieving unit according to different controls to thereby allow the imaging unit to image the generic image data in parallel even when retrieval processing is executed in the retrieving unit.

41. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that images a subject image and stores the subject image on a storage medium, comprising:

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with key image data, out of generic image data stored in the storage medium; and

a reproduction processing unit that reproduces the generic image data stored in the storage medium,

wherein the imaging apparatus executes access to the storage medium by the reproduction processing unit and access to the storage medium by the retrieving unit according to different controls to thereby allow the reproduction processing unit to reproduce the generic image data in parallel even when retrieval processing is executed in the retrieving unit.

42. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that images a subject image and stores the subject image on a storage medium, comprising:

an operation mode setting unit that sets an operation mode of the imaging apparatus; and

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with key image data, out of generic image data stored in the storage medium,

wherein when the imaging apparatus is set in an operation mode in which retrieval processing is executable by the retrieving unit, the retrieving unit maintains key image data designated in advance as a retrieval key.

43. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 42, wherein the key image data maintained as the retrieval key is key image data whose acquisition time is latest or earliest or which is used immediately before the key image data is used.

44. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus, comprising:

an imaging unit that acquires generic image data to be retrieved or key image data to be used as retrieval key by imaging an image of a subject;

a storage medium that stores the imaged generic image data; and

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with the key image data, out of the generic image data stored in the storage medium,

wherein the imaging apparatus further comprises a storage control unit that stores the key image data imaged by the imaging unit in the storage medium in an expression distinguishable from the generic image data.

45. (Withdrawn) A control program that, when a first operation input in acquiring generic image data is inputted to an imaging apparatus, which includes:

an imaging unit that acquires generic image data to be retrieved or key image data to be used as retrieval key by imaging an image of a subject;

an image storage medium that stores the imaged generic image data;

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with the key image data, out of the generic image data stored in the image storage medium; and

an operating unit for inputting an operation input, from the operating unit, causes the imaging unit to acquire the generic image data and store the generic image data in the storage medium, and

when a second operation input for acquiring the key image data inputted in an operation form different from the first operation input is inputted to the imaging apparatus from the operating unit, controls the imaging unit to acquire the key image data.

46. (Withdrawn) A control program that causes an imaging apparatus, which includes:

an imaging unit that acquires generic image data to be retrieved or key image data to be used as retrieval key by imaging an image of a subject;

an image storage medium that stores the imaged generic image data;

a retrieving unit that retrieves generic image data, which has a predetermined relation with the key image data, out of the generic image data stored in the image storage medium; and

an operating unit for inputting an operation input, to store the key image data imaged by the imaging unit in the storage medium in an expression distinguishable from the generic image data.

47. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus comprising:

photoelectric conversion unit that converts reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputs the electric signal;

display unit that displays image data of a subject corresponding to the electric signal;

a storage medium that stores plural retrieval object image data;

retrieving unit that retrieves similar image data similar to image data of the subject from the plural retrieval object image data before the image data of the subject is stored in the storage medium; and

display control unit that controls the display unit to display the retrieved similar image data and the image data of the subject in expressions visually distinguishable from each other.

48. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the retrieving unit includes unit that executes image retrieval using preview image data before photographing processing as image data of the subject.

49. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the retrieving unit includes unit that executes image retrieval using the image data of the subject immediately after photographing processing is executed on the image data of the subject.

50. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 49, further comprising:

a shutter button for instructing photographing processing for the subject; and
stop control unit that stops retrieval processing by the retrieving unit while continuous photographing is instructed by the shutter button.

51. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, further comprising:

selecting unit that selects the similar image data displayed on the display unit; and
deleting unit that deletes the selected similar image data from the storage medium.

52. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the display control unit includes emphatic display unit that emphatically displays parts of the similar image data similar to the image data of the subject.

53. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the retrieving unit retrieves the similar image data using any one of the image data stored in the storage medium instead of the image data of the subject.

54. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the display control unit causes the display unit to display icon image data representing similarity or a similar characteristic instead of the similar image data.

55. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the retrieving unit includes priority retrieving unit that executes retrieval of the similar image data in accordance with priorities based on incidental information such as photographing time, an amount of data, or photographing parameters of the retrieval object image data.

56. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein, in displaying the similar image data, the display control unit causes the display unit to display the similar image data in accordance with priorities based on incidental information such as similarity, photographing time, an amount of data, or photographing parameters for the similar image data.

57. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the display control unit further includes:

unit that designates a number of the similar image data that the display control unit causes the display unit to display simultaneously; and

unit that causes the display unit to display the similar image data of the designated number.

58. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 47, wherein the display control unit further includes:

unit that creates thumbnail data of the similar image data; and

unit that causes the display unit to display the created thumbnail data instead of the similar image data.

59. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus comprising:

photoelectric conversion unit that converts reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputs the electric signal;

a storage medium that stores plural retrieval object image data including image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal;

retrieving unit that retrieves similar image data of the retrieval object image data similar to data set as key image data;

print data creating unit that creates print data for printing the retrieved similar image data and the image data of the subject in forms visually distinguishable from each other; and

transmitting unit that is directly connected to an image printing apparatus for printing the print data and transmits the print data.

60. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, further comprising print instructing unit that instructs print object data to be printed out of the plural retrieval object image data, wherein

the retrieving unit uses the print object data as the key image data.

61. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the print data creating unit creates the print data such that parts of the similar image data similar to the key image data are emphatically printed.

62. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the print data creating unit creates the print data such that icon image data representing similarity or a similar characteristic is printed instead of the similar image data.

63. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the retrieving unit includes priority retrieving unit that executes retrieval of the similar image data in accordance with priorities based on incidental information such as photographing time, an amount of data, or photographing parameters of the retrieval object image data.

64. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, wherein, in printing the similar image data, the print data creating unit creates the print data such that

the similar image data is printed in accordance with priorities based on incidental information such as similarity, photographing time, an amount of data, or photographing parameters for the similar image data.

65. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, wherein the print data creating unit further includes:

unit that designates a number of the similar image data that are printed on one print medium; and

unit that creates the print data for the similar image data of the designated number.

66. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 59, further comprising unit that creates thumbnail data of the similar image data, wherein

the print data creating unit creates the print data using the created thumbnail data instead of the similar image data.

67. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that includes a storage medium that stores retrieval object image data, comprising:

photoelectric conversion unit that converts reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputs the electric signal;

display unit that displays image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal as preview; and

retrieving unit that retrieves similar image data similar to the image data of the subject displayed as preview from the retrieval object image data.

68. (Withdrawn) An imaging apparatus that includes a storage medium that stores retrieval object image data, comprising:

photoelectric conversion unit that converts reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputs the electric signal;

storage control unit that causes the storage medium to store image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal; and

retrieving unit that retrieves similar image data similar to the image data of the subject from the storage medium when the storage of the image data of the subject on the storage medium is completed.

69. (Withdrawn) The imaging apparatus according to claim 68, further comprising:

a shutter button for instructing photographing processing for the subject; and
stop control unit that stops retrieval processing by the retrieving unit while continuous photographing is instructed by the shutter button.

70. (Withdrawn) A method of controlling an imaging apparatus having a storing unit that stores plural retrieval object image data, comprising:

a photoelectric conversion step of converting reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputting the electric signal;

a display step of displaying image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal;

a retrieving step of retrieving similar image data similar to the image data of the subject from the plural retrieval object image data before the image data of the subject is stored in the storing unit; and

a step of displaying the retrieved similar image data and the image data of the subject in expressions visually distinguishable from each other.

71. (Withdrawn) A method of controlling an imaging apparatus having a storing unit that stores plural retrieval object image data, comprising:

a photoelectric conversion step of converting reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputting the electric signal;

a storing step of storing image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal in the storage medium as one of the retrieval object image data;

a retrieving step of retrieving similar image data of the retrieval object image data similar to data set as key image data;

a print data creating step of creating print data for printing the retrieved similar image data and the image data of the subject in forms visually distinguishable from each other; and

a transmitting step of, when an image printing apparatus for printing the print data and the imaging apparatus are connected directly, transmitting the print data to the image printing apparatus.

72. (Withdrawn) A method of controlling an imaging apparatus including a storage medium that stores retrieval object image data, comprising:

a photoelectric conversion step of converting reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputting the electric signal;

a display step of displaying image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal as preview; and

a retrieving step of retrieving similar image data similar to the image data of the subject displayed as preview from the storage medium.

73. (Withdrawn) A method of controlling an imaging apparatus including a storage medium that stores retrieval object image data, comprising:

a photoelectric conversion step of converting reflected light from a subject into an electric signal and outputting the electric signal;

a step of causing the storage medium to store image data of the subject corresponding to the electric signal; and

a retrieving step of retrieving similar image data similar to the image data of the subject from the storage medium when the storage of the image data of the subject on the storage medium is completed.

74. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 77 5, wherein said retrieving unit searches for a generic image similar to the key image from the storage medium.

75. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 77 5, further comprising a display unit which displays an image, wherein the display unit displays

images retrieved by the retrieving unit when the mode setting unit sets during the imaging
an image displaying operation mode.

76. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 75, wherein the display unit displays the images retrieved the retrieving unit in response the mode setting unit to switching from the imaging an image capturing operation mode to the reproduction image displaying operation mode.

77. (New) A digital camera operable in an imaging mode and a reproduction mode, comprising:

a capturing unit that captures a subject image;

a storing unit that stores the subject image captured by said capturing unit on a storage medium;

a retrieving unit that performs a retrieval operation of an image from the subject image stored on the storage medium;

a plurality of input elements by which a user inputs instructions to said digital camera; and

a user-operable mode setting unit setting one of the imaging mode and the reproduction mode,

wherein when the mode setting unit sets the imaging mode, said capturing unit sets the subject image as a generic image to be retrieved or a key image to be used as a retrieval key for a retrieval operation, depending on the instructions received from the user operating at least one of the input elements, and

wherein when said mode setting unit sets the reproduction mode:

the results of the retrieval operation performed in the imaging mode are automatically displayed on a display unit;

a key-image capture operation is performed with said capturing unit in response instructions received from the user operating at least one of the input elements, and a new retrieval operation is performed with said retrieval unit in response to instructions received from the user operating at least one of the input elements; and

a key-image-selection operation is performed with said retrieval unit in response instructions received from the user operating at least one of the input elements, so that key images stored in said storing unit are displayed on the display unit and a user can select one of the displayed images as a new key image by the user operating at least one of the input elements.